



Laboratory studies of products of N₂O₅ uptake on Cl⁻ containing substrates

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[1] The reaction of dinitrogen pentoxide with chloride-containing substrates over a concentration range relevant to the atmosphere was examined using cavity ring-down spectroscopy (CaRDS) and chemical ionization mass spectrometry (CIMS). The main product, nitryl chloride (ClNO₂), was formed in efficiencies in the range 0.2 to 0.8 for chloride concentrations of 0.02 to 0.5M. These values are somewhat lower than those from previous, less detailed, measurements carried out mainly at much larger chloride concentrations in NaCl-water mixtures. Substrates having pH<2 also evolved molecular chlorine (Cl₂), with ClNO₂ as an intermediate. The ClNO₂ yields are compared to recent field measurements of N₂O₅ and ClNO₂ as a function of aerosol chloride concentration and shown to quantitatively explain the observations. **Citation:** Roberts, J. M., H. D. Osthoff, S. S. Brown, A. R. Ravishankara, D. Coffman, P. Quinn, and T. Bates (2009), Laboratory studies of products of N₂O₅ uptake on Cl⁻ containing substrates, *Geophys. Res. Lett.*, 36, L20808, doi:10.1029/2009GL040448.

1. Introduction

[2] Efficient reaction of dinitrogen pentoxide (N₂O₅) with sodium chloride (NaCl) or sea salt to produce nitryl chloride (ClNO₂) has been observed by *Finlayson-Pitts et al.* [1989] and has been suggested in modeling studies as a mechanism for chlorine activation (i.e., conversion of unreactive chlorine chemicals to reactive forms) in the troposphere [*Erickson et al.*, 1999; *McFiggans et al.*, 2002; *Pechtl and von Glasow*, 2007]. Generally, these modeling studies have inferred only modest ClNO₂ formation, limited either by the low N₂O₅ in the remote marine boundary layer where sea salt aerosol is abundant, or low sea salt surface areas in polluted coastal areas where N₂O₅ can be abundant. Recent observations of ClNO₂ in the polluted marine boundary layer (MBL) [*Osthoff et al.*, 2008; *Kercher et al.*, 2009] have shown ClNO₂ to be significantly more abundant than such model estimates, and strongly imply that chlorine activation by dinitrogen pentoxide also occurs

on sub-micron aerosol of modest chloride content ([Cl⁻] = 0.01 to 0.1 M). Previous laboratory measurements have shown that conversion of N₂O₅ to ClNO₂ could also occur on solutions of low chloride content ([Cl⁻] < 1M) at neutral un-buffered pH [*Behnke et al.*, 1997], and on NaCl/NaNO₃ particles at lower [Cl⁻] [*Bertram and Thornton*, 2009]. Neither study emphasized the low [Cl⁻] concentration region nor examined the variety of aerosol substrates present in the troposphere, e.g., (NH₄)HSO₄, (NH₄)₂SO₄, and lower pH (2 to 3 pH units) solutions.

[3] Here we report ClNO₂ yields in the reactive uptake of N₂O₅ on substrates that mimic atmospheric aerosols. Bulk Cl⁻ containing substrates were exposed to N₂O₅ in a flow system in which uptake of N₂O₅, and production of ClNO₂ and Cl₂, were measured simultaneously. The results were compared to published results for pure NaCl solutions [*Behnke et al.*, 1997], and NaNO₃/NaCl particles [*Bertram and Thornton*, 2009], and are used to infer the importance of N₂O₅ uptake on sub-micron aerosol as a general source for tropospheric ClNO₂. In addition, the data are fit to a competitive reaction model that permits the production of ClNO₂ due to N₂O₅ uptake to be parameterized as a function of aerosol chloride concentration. A number of experiments in which Cl₂ evolution was also observed from low pH substrates (pH < 2) have been described previously by *Roberts et al.* [2008] and so are not described here.

2. Experimental Methods

[4] Figure 1 shows the schematic of the apparatus used to measure the ClNO₂ production from N₂O₅ uptake. The total gas flows through the apparatus ranged from 5 to 7 standard liters per minute (SLPM), the geometric surface areas of the test substrates were 10.1 cm². The reactor was at ambient pressure, (625 Torr), and ambient temperature (297±2K). The tubing and reactor were constructed of all PFA–Teflon. Mixing ratios of N₂O₅ flowing through the reactor ranged from 1 to 6 ppbv (parts per billion by volume). They were produced by adding a small flow of N₂O₅, from a sample at 195K, to the humidified air stream (25–40% RH) and measured by Cavity Ring-down Spectroscopy (CaRDS) [*Dubé et al.*, 2006]. ClNO₂ and Cl₂ were measured at the exit of the flow reactor via chemical ionization mass spectrometry with iodide as the reactant ion (I⁻ CIMS) at masses 162 {I•Cl}⁻ and 197 {I•Cl₂}⁻, respectively [*McNeill et al.*, 2006; *Osthoff et al.*, 2008; *Roberts et al.*, 2008]. Calibration of the CaRDS was based on the absorption cross section of NO₃ [*Dubé et al.*, 2006; *Osthoff et al.*, 2007], and the transmission of NO₃ and N₂O₅ through the optical system was validated by the nitric oxide (NO) titration method described by *Fuchs et al.* [2008].

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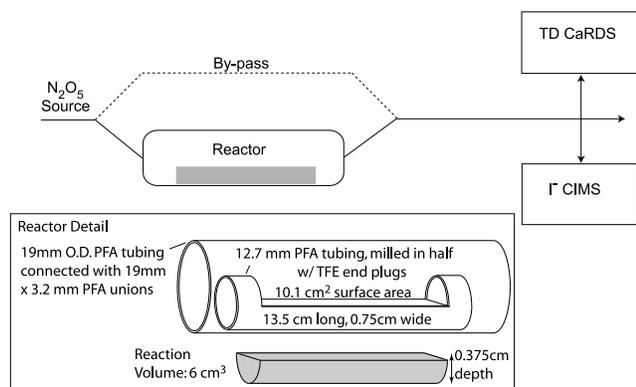


Figure 1. Schematic diagrams of the flow system used for the exposure of bulk solutions to N₂O₅, and the details of the reactor and sample holder.

[5] ClNO₂ was calibrated by three different methods [Osthoff *et al.*, 2008], quantitative conversion of N₂O₅ on deliquesced NaCl, and odd-nitrogen (NO_y) measurement or UV absorption measurements of a synthetic ClNO₂ sample. The quantitative conversion of N₂O₅ on deliquesced NaCl, which was also observed by Behnke *et al.* [1997] and Schweitzer *et al.* [1998], was used routinely in this work. Detection limits were 0.5 pptv for N₂O₅ (1 second), 5 pptv for ClNO₂ (30 sec average), and 3pptv for Cl₂ (30 sec average). The overall uncertainties in the measurements were ±(25%+0.5pptv) for N₂O₅, ±(20%+5 pptv) for the ClNO₂ measurements, and ±(40%+3pptv) for the Cl₂ measurements. The N₂O₅ taken up in these experiments ranged from 400 to 1350 pptv and the ClNO₂ produced ranged from detection limit up to 1200 pptv. Thus the signal-to-noise ratios were extremely good for the larger yields.

[6] The loss of N₂O₅ to the walls of the reactor and tubing in the absence of any substrate or solution was measured repeatedly during the course of the experiment and was found to be 50 ± 50 pptv. This “blank” value, assumed to be lost even in the presence of the sample, was subtracted from the measured concentration of N₂O₅ taken up and the uncertainty associated with this was accounted for in the value quoted for N₂O₅ above. The uncertainties in the ratio of

Table 1. Summary of Substrates and Results of N₂O₅ and ClNO₂ Uptake Experiments^a

Gas Phase Species	Substrate	Result
N ₂ O ₅ and HCl ^b	None, CIMS inlet only	No ClNO ₂ or Cl ₂
N ₂ O ₅	0.3M (NH ₄)HSO ₄ + 0.053M Cl ⁻	ClNO ₂ , Cl ₂ pulses ^c
N ₂ O ₅	NaCl/0.3M (NH ₄)HSO ₄ , pH~2	ClNO ₂ , Cl ₂
N ₂ O ₅	0.15M (NH ₄) ₂ SO ₄ + [Cl ⁻] ^d	ClNO ₂
N ₂ O ₅	D.I Water + [Cl ⁻] ^d	ClNO ₂
N ₂ O ₅	NaCl + HCl _(conc)	Cl ₂
N ₂ O ₅	NaCl + Oxalic acid	ClNO ₂ , Cl ₂
N ₂ O ₅	Oxalic + [Cl ⁻] ^d	ClNO ₂ , Cl ₂
ClNO ₂	NaCl + Oxalic acid	Cl ₂
N ₂ O ₅	Sea Salt + Oxalic acid	ClNO ₂ , Cl ₂
N ₂ O ₅	Oxalic acid + 0.5M Cl ⁻	ClNO ₂ , Cl ₂
	+ 0.5M Br ⁻	

^acf. Roberts *et al.* [2008].

^bHCl was added at final mixing ratio of 5ppbv.

^cThought to arise from short term surface acidification due to hydrolysis of N₂O₅ to HNO₃.

^d[Cl⁻] denotes a range of chloride ion concentrations of between 0.001 and 1M.

ClNO₂ produced to N₂O₅ taken up were propagated in quadrature from uncertainties in the individual concentrations. It should be recognized, however, that these uncertainties are conservative since the method of calibrating ClNO₂ from the known unit yield of the N₂O₅ reaction at high [Cl⁻] results in a relative uncertainty that is somewhat lower.

[7] Sample substrates were prepared either by preparation of solutions of known concentration in distilled water, or by creation of a slurry by addition of a small amount of water to a sample of the appropriate solid. In the case of ammonium bisulfate, (NH₄)HSO₄, a stoichiometric amount of H₂SO₄ was added to an (NH₄)₂SO₄ solution resulting in a 0.3M HSO₄⁻ solution. The solutions or solid/liquid mixtures, were placed in a shallow, open-faced Teflon reservoir of known surface area, which was then placed within the PFA reaction chamber. The substrates tested during this study are listed in Table 1. pH was measured either by pH test paper (uncertainty ± 0.5 pH units) or by a pH meter (not corrected for ionic strength, uncertainty ± 0.2 pH units).

3. Results

[8] Results of a typical N₂O₅ uptake experiment are shown in Figure 2. N₂O₅ in humidified zero air was either sampled directly by the TD-CaRDS and I⁻CIMS instruments or after passing through the flow reactor that contained samples of the substrate. The amount of ClNO₂ produced was determined from the difference between the amount of ClNO₂ measured with the reactor in-line, and the background ClNO₂ counts present in the CIMS when the reactor was out of line. The amount of N₂O₅ taken up was determined by the difference between the N₂O₅ remaining in the gas stream after reaction, and the N₂O₅ that would have been in the gas stream had no uptake occurred, as determined by interpolation of the N₂O₅ levels before and

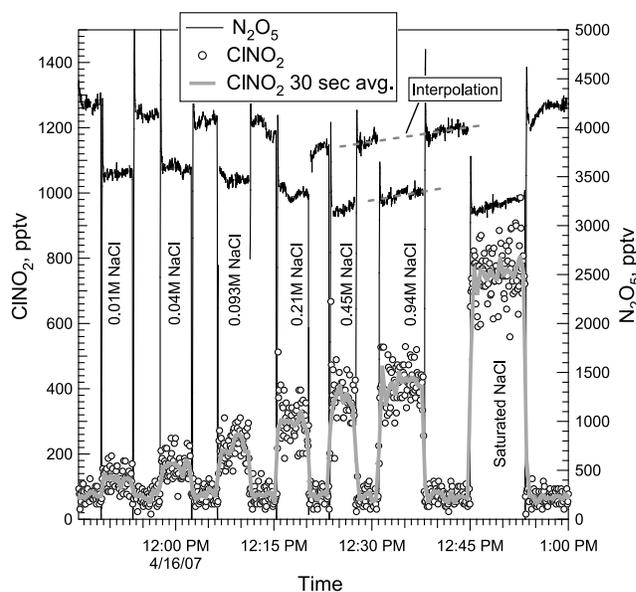


Figure 2. Measured N₂O₅, and ClNO₂ following the exposure of (NH₄)HSO₄ to N₂O₅ at a series of [Cl⁻]. The solid line is 1 second N₂O₅, the dots are individual ClNO₂ measurements and the dashed line is the 30 second average ClNO₂.

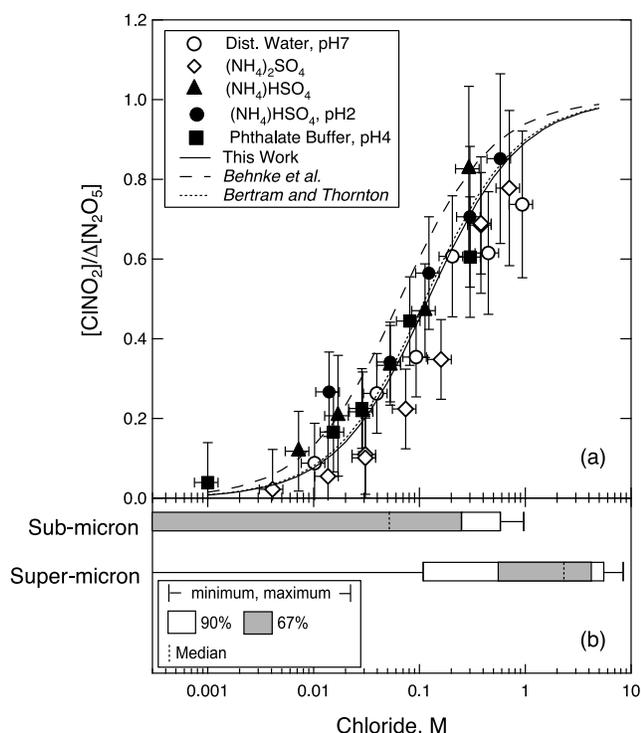


Figure 3. (a) The efficiency of conversion of N₂O₅ to ClNO₂ as a function of substrate chloride concentration, and (b) the range of sub- and super-micron chloride concentrations measured during the TexAQS-GoMACCS 2006 field study in the Gulf of Mexico. The curves in Figure 3a are fits to the competitive reaction model for the measurements in this work (solid line), *Behnke et al.* [1997] (dashed line), and *Bertram and Thornton* [2009] (dotted line).

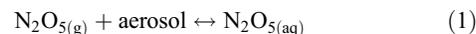
after reaction (as in the example shown in Figure 2) and corrected for the “blank” uptake. In cases where the N₂O₅ signal was not stable for an entire cycle of these measurements, the N₂O₅ taken up was determined by the fall or rise in N₂O₅ when the reactor was placed in-line or taken out of line, respectively. The ClNO₂ production efficiency was taken as the ratio of the measured ClNO₂ production to the N₂O₅ loss. It is clear from simple mass balance considerations that changes in concentration due to loss of water to the humidified stream, or loss of Cl⁻ from the surface layer are small on the time scale of the experiments. Moreover, no systematic changes in ClNO₂ production were observed over the course of an individual exposure.

[9] The results of uptake experiments are shown in Figure 3a, and a fit to this data using the model described below is shown, along with similar fits from *Behnke et al.* [1997], and *Bertram and Thornton* [2009]. The conversion efficiencies measured in our work were in a range that agreed with, or was slightly lower (25–30%), than the previous results. There was no systematic dependence of the ClNO₂ production efficiency on the nature of the substrate, aside from chloride content.

4. Discussion

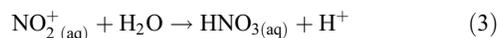
[10] The mechanism for the production of ClNO₂ from N₂O₅ uptake on chloride-containing solutions has been

discussed previously [*Behnke et al.*, 1997; *Rossi*, 2003; *Bertram and Thornton*, 2009] and is thought to proceed through the reversible solvation of N₂O₅ in aqueous solution and ionization, which is the rate-limiting step in the uptake process;



A number of experimental observations suggest that reaction (2) is rate limiting for the overall reactive uptake of N₂O₅, and that the branching between different reaction products arises from the competitive reaction of nitronium ion (NO₂⁺) with either water or other anions in solution. First, the uptake coefficient of N₂O₅ is larger on aqueous surfaces compared to dry or surfactant-coated solutions [*Thornton and Abbatt*, 2005], so that the availability of water for the solvation and ionization process is critical. Second, the presence of nitrate in solution suppresses uptake of N₂O₅ [*Mentel et al.*, 1999; *Wahner et al.*, 1998; *Bertram and Thornton*, 2009], indicating that reaction (2) is reversible and that NO₃⁻ ions can compete for reaction of NO₂⁺ in solution. Third, this work as well as preceding work [*Behnke et al.*, 1997; *Rossi*, 2003; *Bertram and Thornton*, 2009] has shown that the coefficient for uptake of N₂O₅ is independent of the chloride concentration.

[11] The dependence of ClNO₂ formation on chloride ion concentration is attributed to the competitive reaction of nitronium ion, NO₂⁺ with either H₂O or Cl⁻;



In our experimental system the NO₃⁻ resulting from N₂O₅ uptake was much too small in concentration ($\ll 10^{-4}$ M) to affect the NO₂⁺ concentrations; therefore, we can assume that Reactions 3 and 4 are the only important reactions of NO₂⁺, and the data can be fit to a competitive reaction expression;

$$\frac{[\text{ClNO}_2]}{\Delta[\text{N}_2\text{O}_5]} = \frac{1}{\frac{k_3[\text{H}_2\text{O}]}{k_4[\text{Cl}^-]} + 1} \quad (5)$$

The fit of this expression to data from this study resulted in a ratio k_4/k_3 of 450 ± 100 as shown in Figure 3a. The analysis from *Behnke et al.* [1997] resulted in a ratio k_4/k_3 of 836 ± 32 , and the analysis given by *Bertram and Thornton* [2009] resulted in a ratio of 483 ± 175 , and these are also shown in Figure 3a. It should be noted that *Behnke et al.*'s [1997] measurements had far fewer data points in the low [Cl⁻] range, and were for pure NaCl/water solutions. Also, the uncertainty quoted by *Behnke et al.* [1997] was apparently for the fit only and did not include all the experimental uncertainties. The analysis of *Bertram and Thornton* [2009] was based on a smaller number of measurements on mixed NaNO₃/NaCl particles,

and included only one data point in the lower chloride range (0.001 to 0.3 M) most relevant to the current study. The three k_4/k_3 ratio determinations are of similar magnitude and yield similar estimates for ClNO₂ production as a function of aerosol chloride. There is reasonable agreement among the three determinations considering that the present study had more detailed measurements at lower concentrations. In addition, none of the studies corrected their data for the ionic strengths, which would have the effect of lowering the activity of Cl⁻ solutions that contained other salts, i.e., most of our results, and all but one of the *Bertram and Thornton* [2009] data points. This would bring our results slightly closer ($\leq 30\%$) to *Behnke et al.*'s [1997] results.

[12] The extent of ClNO₂ production in the polluted MBL has been recently explored by *Osthoff et al.* [2008] who found that yields in the range of 10 to 65% were required to explain the ambient measurements of ClNO₂. The aerosol chloride concentrations measured in conjunction with the TexAQS-GoMACCS 2006 study [*Osthoff et al.*, 2008] are also shown in Figure 3 for both the sub- and super-micron size ranges. The super micron fraction was mostly dust and sea salt, while the sub micron chloride was thought to have originated from partitioning of gas phase HCl, derived for example from acid displacement from sea salt, to the submicron aerosol [*Osthoff et al.*, 2008]. It is clear that those atmospheric concentrations, and results of our laboratory measurements, are consistent with the chemistry proposed by *Osthoff et al.* [2008] to explain ambient ClNO₂ measurements. Aerosol chloride concentrations sufficient to make the yield of ClNO₂ large can be maintained by equilibration with gas-phase HCl on a time scale rapid compared to the uptake of N₂O₅.

[13] The measurements presented here were made at room temperature, however some idea of the temperature dependence of ClNO₂ formation can be estimated from the likely temperature dependencies of the individual processes. The reaction of NO₂⁺ with Cl⁻, because it is an ion-ion reaction, is likely to have little or no activation energy, and thus have a small temperature dependence. The reaction of NO₂⁺ with H₂O is slower at room temperature (k_4/k_3 is in the range 450 to 836), which implies an activation energy sufficient to result in a much slower reaction at lower temperatures. Accordingly, the yield of ClNO₂ may increase at lower temperature, for a given Cl⁻ concentration.

5. Conclusions

[14] The production of ClNO₂ from the uptake of N₂O₅ on model substrates was measured as a function of chloride ion concentration and pH. The production efficiencies (ClNO₂ produced per N₂O₅ taken up) varied as a function of [Cl⁻] in a manner consistent with a simple competitive reaction model [*Behnke et al.*, 1997; *Bertram and Thornton*, 2009], and were in the range necessary to explain the recent measurements of ClNO₂ in the polluted MBL [*Osthoff et al.*, 2008; *Kercher et al.*, 2009]. There are some indications of a dependence on the nature of the substrate in that the lower pH substrates had slightly higher production efficiencies; however these differences were not outside the uncertainties of the measurements. Observational evidence

suggests that N₂O₅ uptake is rate-limited by solvation and ionization, and that product branching, including ClNO₂ formation, is determined by the subsequent reactions of NO₂⁺ cation. Species other than H₂O or Cl⁻ could potentially compete for NO₂⁺ and give rise to new and, as yet, unexplored chemicals, although these possibilities were not explored in this work.

[15] Mass balance considerations show that sustained production of ClNO₂ (and Cl₂) requires the continued partitioning of gas-phase HCl to particle surfaces. These results also imply that since only modest aerosol chloride concentrations are required to produce substantial ClNO₂, this chemistry is probably not limited to near coastal or MBL environments and may have widespread importance anywhere there is NO_x pollution, since NO_x pollution has been shown to be the main driver of N₂O₅ chemistry [*Aldener et al.*, 2006; *Brown et al.*, 2006]. However, production of Cl₂ will likely require higher [Cl⁻] and hence will be limited to coastal or MBL areas. Future measurements of N₂O₅, ClNO₂, Cl₂, and HCl should be made along side aerosol chloride and acidity, to determine the importance of this chemistry to regional and global chemistry.

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